

Virginia's Multi-Tiered Refugee Mental Health Care Model

Hyojin Im, PhD, MSW, MA
Assistant Professor
School of Social Work
Virginia Commonwealth University
him@vcu.edu

DBHDS

Virginia Department of
Behavioral Health and
Developmental Services



Refugee Challenges



Pre-Migration

- Exposure to war
- Political Violence (Torture, GBV)
- Human rights violations
- Multiple losses



Migration

- Forced displacement
- Continuous losses of family and resources
- Separation
- Congested living



Post-Migration

- Cultural & language barriers
- Discrimination
- Acculturative stress
- Identity crisis

Refugee Mental Health

- * High risk of developing common mental disorders
- * A meta-analysis of 181 surveys over 80,000 refugees from 40 countries reported a prevalence rate of 30.6% for PTSD & 30.8% for depression (Steel et al., 2009).
- * In some populations, over 50% of population reported PTSD and depression (Longitudinal studies with Cambodian refugees in the U.S.; Somali refugees in Uganda camp)

Multi-Tiered Refugee Mental Health Care Model

- ❖ To guide a stratified intervention model and capacity building planning for refugee adjustment and mental health support.
- ❖ To adequately respond to various mental health and psychosocial support needs of refugees, while providing appropriate and effective service referrals tailored to the early stages of resettlement.

Two pillars

- ❖ Two pillars will be adopted as the main principles of care and capacity training:
 - ❖ **Trauma-informed**
 - ❖ **Culture-informed**

Multi-Tiered Model

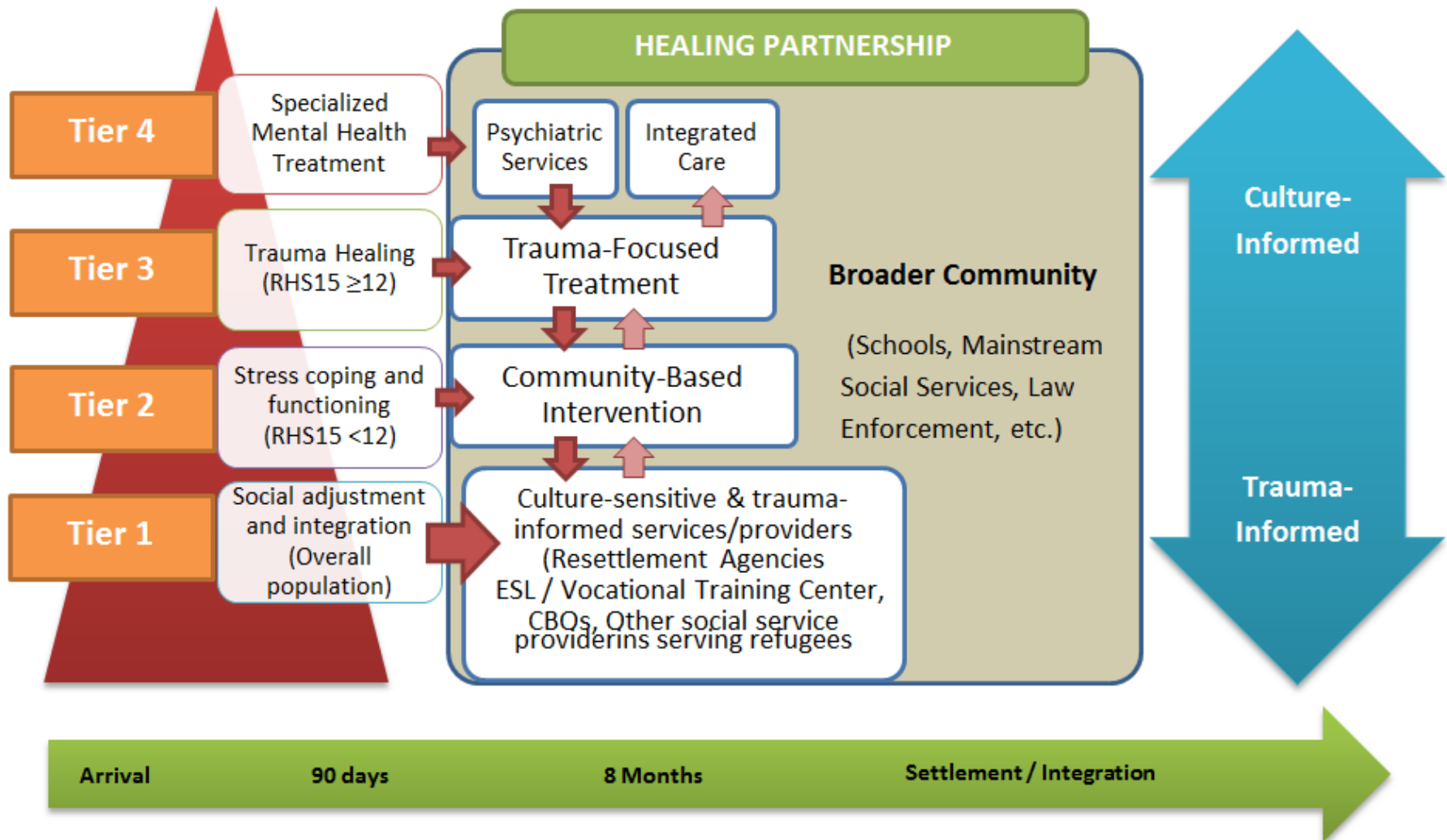


Figure: Multi-Tiered Refugee Mental Health Care Model (Im, 2014)

Tier 1 : Trauma-Informed & Culture-Sensitive Services

Tier 1 includes trauma-informed and culture-sensitive care integrated into existing services. Efforts in Tier 1 are to promote social adjustment and integration of refugee populations by building capacity of refugee service providers to recognize and respond to unique needs of refugees.

Tier 2: Community-Based Intervention

Tier 2 focuses on psychological distress and social functioning by providing community-based interventions led by competent and experienced refugee community leaders. The community-based interventions aim to increase skills to deal with acculturation stress and other psychosocial needs.

Tier 3: Trauma-Focused Treatment

Tier 3 is designed for targeted groups whose RHS-15 score is 12+. Mental health services at Tier 3 include culturally responsive trauma-focused treatment at CSBs and/or mental health professionals. Addressing trauma-related common mental disorders (CMDs) is the main goal of this stage.

Tier 4: Specialized MH Care

Tier 4 includes intense, specialized care and mental health treatment for refugees with severe mental illness. Because of the acute level of care, not many refugees are treated in Tier 4.

TIPAG Pilot

The TIPAG pilot project focused on the development of capacity building materials and intervention curricula for **Tier 2** in order to create a culturally responsive infrastructure of refugee resources and to develop competent refugee leaders.

TIPAG Pilot

- ❖ Trauma Informed Psycho-Educational Adjustment Group (TIPAG) was adapted to promote positive mental health and cultural adjustment in the refugee community.
- ❖ Trained facilitators and community brokers assist fellow refugees with successful cultural integration and adjustment to the local community.

TIPAG Pilot

- ❖ The program focuses on the mental health of refugee families by providing community-based psychosocial interventions. In addition, it aims to promote healthy cultural adaptation through education and peer-led intervention.
- ❖ These psycho-educational groups educate refugees with basic coping skills, help facilitate cultural adjustment, and promote recreational and leisure activities among their communities.

Community Healing Partnership

In order to establish a culturally sensitive and effective process of mental health care and resources, it is essential to understand how each stakeholder plays a role in the larger systems of care, while addressing its expectations and areas of growth in refugee adjustment.

Community Healing Partnership

This project team believes that building a healing partnership among compassionate community stakeholders will help enhance the community's capacity to address the numerous resettlement challenges many face when making a new home in the United States.